



MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION FOR PUPIL TRANSPORTATION

6250 W. Michigan Ave., Suite A ■ Lansing, MI 48917

Tel: 517.886.0881 ■ Fax: 517.886.0882

Testimony on HB 5507

House Committee on Transportation Michigan House of Representatives

Wednesday, March 28, 2012
Room 519, House Office Building
Lansing, Michigan

Paul Wegmeyer
Chair
MAPT Legislative Committee

Good morning. Thank you Chairman Opsommer and the entire House Committee on Transportation for allowing us the opportunity to testify today before this distinguished committee regarding **HB 5507** (2012). On behalf of the Michigan Association for Pupil Transportation, we would also like to thank the sponsor of the bill, Representative Hughes, for addressing the issue of school bus safety in Michigan.

My name is Paul Wegmeyer. I currently serve as the supervisor of transportation at Holt Public Schools. I have been a licensed CDL driver of commercial motor vehicles for 30 years. I am also a Third Party Test Examiner and have been the owner and designated representative of a Third Party Testing organization for the past 16 years with multiple automobile, motorcycle and CDL test sites across northern Lower Michigan in partnership with the Michigan Department of State. The testimony I am providing for you today is on behalf of the Michigan Association for Pupil Transportation (MAPT) where I currently serve as chair of the association's legislative committee.

MAPT represents over 800 pupil transportation officials from 826 public, private and contract school bus fleets throughout Michigan. These administrators oversee the effective, efficient and safe transportation of approximately 860,000¹ children to and from school, every school day, on approximately 15,000 school buses driven by some 15,000 Michigan school bus drivers who cover over 1,000,000 miles [*the equivalent of 40 trips around the world*] every school day throughout Upper and Lower Michigan in accomplishing this task.

My purpose today is to present **MAPT's support for HB 5507 as introduced**. On behalf of transportation supervisors, directors and school bus drivers across the state, I want to express our most sincere condolences to the Privacky family and to assure you, that our organization is engaged and committed to learn from this very unfortunate accident so that changes can be considered to help prevent similar rear end collisions in the future.

School buses in the State of Michigan are uniquely designed and constructed to protect its passengers from a variety of crash forces created by impacts from multiple directions including rollovers. No other transportation vehicle is more effective in saving lives than a yellow and black school bus. That said, our association recognizes that little has been done over the past 40 years to review the design and construction standards of the rear of the school bus and that this may be the time to learn more about newer technologies that are available to make a school bus even more conspicuous than it already is. Our association also recognizes that there is a growing problem, not only in this state, but across the nation with motorists who pass school buses illegally while children are loading and unloading at approved bus stops with overhead red lights flashing and the stop arm extended. After a compassionate review of the December 14, 2011 accident involving a school bus in Ottawa County, our association embraces HB 5507 as an opportunity to explore effective ways of making the bus more conspicuous to motorists so that future accidents may be avoided and lives can be saved.

¹ 2007-08 SE-4094 Pupil Transportation Expense Report, Michigan Department of Education, Fall 2008

MAPT has begun an effort to bring together pupil transportation experts including representatives from the Michigan State Police Bus Inspection Unit, the Michigan Department of Education Pupil Transportation Unit, university engineering experts, bus manufacturers, Michigan-based exterior lighting experts and pupil transportation leaders to explore newer technologies that are available to help motorists recognize when a school bus is preparing to stop and when the school bus is performing a loading/unloading school bus stop. We are very encouraged by what is available and what we are learning. Some of these technologies include pre-emptive brake lights which can be very successful in alerting motorists when the brake pedal of the school bus is applied. In addition, LED (Light Emitting Diode) lights are available for all lighting of a school bus (overhead yellows and reds; brake lights; clearance lights; back up lights; etc.) which react much faster than incandescent lights, giving motorists even more valuable reaction time. (For example: At 60 mph, the reaction time improvement between LED lights compared with incandescent lights can offer some 60 additional feet of reaction time.)

The standards for brake lights, overhead lights, clearance lights, etc., on commercial motor vehicles are based on state and federal incandescent standards dating back to the 1970's. For safety-sensitive equipment, like yellow and black school buses, the time may be upon us to review these dated standards and embrace newer technologies to help all motorists be more aware, faster, of the unique stopping activities that come from performing school bus stops on Michigan rural and urban roads and highways.

Our association is very willing to continue our investigative work with a commitment to return to this Committee with a recommendation to enhance the lighting for the rear of the school bus to reduce accidents and injury to all persons inside and outside the bus. We do not recommend a redesign of the school bus to redistribute crash forces into the passengers of the school bus from the next rear end collision, but are highly motivated to address what can be done to make the bus more conspicuous and avoid the next crash altogether so that more lives may be saved.

Mr. Chairman, I would be happy to address any questions you or your fellow committee members may have.

###